

Due to the presence of Schweinitz's sunflower within the project area as well as within 1-mile of the project area, a biological conclusion of "May affect, likely to adversely affect" has been given. Additional surveys will be required prior to project construction, and this biological conclusion will necessitate further coordination and consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. A Biological Assessment and a Biological Opinion will be completed prior to the completion of the final environmental document.

Smooth Coneflower

Smooth coneflower is a perennial herb in the Aster family that grows up to 1.5 meters tall from a vertical root stock. Flower heads are usually solitary. The rays of the flowers (petal-like structures) are light pink to purplish in color. Flowering occurs from late May through mid-July and fruits develop from late June to September. The fruiting structures often persist through the fall. Smooth coneflower is typically found in open woods, cedar barrens, roadsides, clearcuts, dry limestone bluffs, and power line rights-of-way.

Biological Conclusion: No Effect

Habitat for the smooth coneflower is located within the project area within the disturbed areas along the railroad tracks and roadside. Smooth coneflower surveys were conducted in 2006. No smooth coneflower specimens were observed.

The NCNHP database has no records of smooth coneflower occurring within 1-mile of the project study area. The proposed project will have no effect on the smooth coneflower. However, due to the presence of potential habitat within the project area, additional surveys will be required prior to construction.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker

The adult red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) is a small black and white bird with small red streaks on the sides of the nape in the male. The back of the RCW is black and white with horizontal stripes. The breast and underside of this woodpecker are white with streaked flanks. The RCW has a large white cheek patch surrounded by the black cap, nape, and throat.

The RCW is endemic to mature fire maintained forests where it uses open, old growth stands of southern pines, particularly longleaf pine, for foraging and nesting habitat. These birds nest exclusively in trees that are greater than 60 years old and are contiguous with pine stands at least 30 years of age. These woodpeckers nest and roost in cavities excavated in living pine trees that are infected with the fungus that causes red-heart disease. Cavities are located in clusters from 12 to 100 feet above the ground and average 30 to 50 feet high. Cavity trees can be identified by a large incrustation of running sap that surrounds the tree. The RCW lays its eggs in April, May, and June; the eggs hatch approximately 10 to 12 days later.

Biological Conclusion: No Effect